

The Apostles' Creed Week 6

I believe in the Holy Spirit

In our study of the Apostles' Creed we need to remember that it was formulated at a time when there was some controversy over the person and work of Our Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason we have a short sentence on our belief in God the Father; a long extended paragraph on the Lord Jesus Christ and just a very short statement on our belief in the Holy Spirit! The Nicene Creed (A.D. 325), recited during the Service of Holy Communion, does expand the statement somewhat: - *"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets."*

Note that this extended version does speak of the Holy Spirit as *"the giver of life"* (Genesis chapter 2, verse 7) and that He was active throughout the Old Testament He *"has spoken through the prophets."* (Numbers 11, verses 24 – 25 and verse 29; Acts 2, verses 29 – 31; Hebrews chapter 1, verse 1)

It is easy to think of the Holy Spirit coming on the Church on the Day of Pentecost. However, in reading scripture we find that the Spirit of God is referred to throughout the whole of the Bible from Genesis 1, verse 2, *"darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering (brooding like a mother hen) over the waters"* right through to Revelation 22, verse 17 *"The Spirit and the Bride say 'come!'"*.

Throughout the Old Testament there are occasions where a direct revelation of, or through, the Spirit of God is recorded. That of Moses and his assistants in the Book of Numbers is noted above. Also on record is the empowering of Saul as designated King over the people of God. Read 1 Samuel 10, verses 1 – 13. Remember that because of Saul's repeated disobedience he was rejected by the Lord God – 1 Samuel 16, verse 14. It is worth noting at this point the words of King David as recorded in Psalm 51, verse 10 – 11, the basis of the versicle and response in Morning and Evening Prayer in the Prayer Book: V) *"O God make clean our hearts within us; R) And take not your Holy Spirit from us"*.

In the books that record the words and visions of the prophets in the Old Testament, most of them simply say *"The word of the Lord came to . . ."* e.g. Hosea 1, verse 1. However, in the Book of Ezekiel there is a record of the involvement of the Spirit in strengthening and sustaining the prophet for his designated work. See for example Ezekiel 2, verses 1 – 2 and Ch 3, verses 10 – 15.

In the New Testament, the book "The Acts of the Apostles" could be designated the book of "The Acts of the Holy Spirit". The sermon of Peter at Pentecost is worth reading in its entirety – Acts 2, verses 14 – 36. Note that Peter immediately refers back to the Old Testament prophet Joel, and that he speaks of Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father which He (Jesus) has poured out on His Church. This is one of the texts on which the phrase *"proceeding from the Father and the Son"* is based. (See also John 15, verse 26 and John 14, verse 26). The controversy over this clause was one of the reasons for the split in A.D. 1054 between the Western and Eastern Churches.

We need to recognise that the giving of the Holy Spirit on that first Day of Pentecost was not just a 'one off'! In Acts 4, verses 23 – 31, we read of the disciples praying to the Lord for boldness to preach the word. The answer comes in verse 31 - *" . . . they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness"*. There is an example and prayer from the Church of God which we need in this our day!

I could go on to another page on the subject! To close, note that the word *"power"* in Acts 1, verse 8 and in the rest of the New Testament when referring to the Holy Spirit e.g. Ephesians 1, verse 19; Ephesians 3, verse 16; 2 Timothy 1, verse 7 etc. comes from the Greek *"dunamis"* from which we get dynamic, dynamo, dynamite etc.! Remember, this power is available to us who believe the Gospel!

*Thou Christ of burning cleansing flame: Send the fire!
Thy Blood-bought gift today we claim: Send the fire!
Look down and see this waiting host,
Give us the promised Holy Ghost;
We want another Pentecost! Send the fire!*

*Original words by William Booth 1829 - 1912
Founder of the Salvation Army*